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Music and Dance in Rabindranath Tagore's Education Philosophy

Santidev Ghose

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MUSIC AND DANCE IN RABINDRANATH TAGORE'S EDUCATION PHILOSOPHY

Santidev Ghose

SANGEET NATAK AKADEMI
Rabindra Bhavan, Ferozshah Road
New Delhi

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FOREWORD

An intellectual assessment of Gurudev's contribution to Indian music is a near impossible job. Yet this joyful adventure is hard to resist. I do not claim to be anywhere near the artists and Pundits who have spent their lives in the study of Rabindra Sangeet. Shri Santidev Ghosh is one—and a very important one—such person. I consider him as one who more than being a singer is a seeker in quest of a solution of this mystery of Rabindra Sangeet. His enquiry therefore has great value.

The greatness of Rabindra Sangeet lies in its outward simplicity. It gives confidence and an assurance to a common man and inspires him to sing a Rabindra Song.

But this simplicity is rather deceptive. It is like the simplicity of expression one finds in Aesop's fables. The fables are simple but unfathomable in their depths of wisdom. Simple singing is as difficult as simple writing. Hundreds of Swaraawalis beckon you and a correct choice needs a great deal of musical wisdom. Many of our musicians are good collectors of musical phrases but very few of them have the proper wisdom to select.

Many Pundits and Ustads placed Rabindra Sangeet on a lower pedestal. Some even thought that it was nothing more than words set to tunes. Some others brushed it aside as something which was good enough for women and children. I would not blame them for their inadequate perception. Music for most of our musicians is only a performing art. Their music is born out of rigorous training and drilling. Their musical performance naturally results in a display. For Gurudev music was a realisation. He never lived without music. It was a part of his being. One notices

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its existence not only in his poetry but also in his prose. The more fortunate ones like Shri Santida who lived and grew under him found it in his movements and even in his normal speech. He sang his way through life.

This is not to say that life offered him all sweetness. It made him savour all kinds of tastes. But the very bitter and sour in his life was transformed into a song. He played with children and fought against the high and mighty with songs. He gave songs to actors in theatre as well as worshippers in temples. In fact there is not a single occasion either in private or public life which the Poet allowed to pass without a song.

It is this total harmony with life itself and all that happens around it that makes an analysis of his songs extremely difficult. One can hardly use anything out of the usual musical jargon to explain the mystery of Rabindra Sangeet. It has lured both the initiated and the uninitiated in music. Separating music from Gurudev's poem is almost like separating fragrance from flower. One does try such chemical methods of separation. But then, the scent loses its colour and the colour its luminosity.

Gurudev was not a musician in the popular sense of the term. In his childhood he did have some kind of training under the orthodox eye of an ustadji. He might have had a bout or two with Dhrupads and Dhamars. There was however a variety of musie all around him in the house. Almost everyone in the family sang and played various kinds of musical instruments. Young Rabindranath soon realized that like the neglected villages there was a great treasure of neglected and despised music in the country. Indian Music was only what the privileged few heard and enjoyed in the Zamindar's Jalsaghars.

It lived and throbbed in farms and fields. It blossomed and sighed with coy village maidens. It walked towards unknown destinations along with the Bauls and the Vaishnav wandering minstrels. It stood in temples with the devotees. It sailed with the oarsmen on the Padma river. He was charged with this music. Here was an unspoilt, organic music without any synthetic embellishment. Here were hosts of singers who sang not to impress the listeners.

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There were none. They were their own singers and their own listeners. They bathed their souls in music. They had nothing to prove. They never wanted to establish themselves as the torch bearers of this Gharana or that. They never sought any recognition. Something within them vibrated and a song was born. It sprang out of their simple tears and laughter. They sang like birds. Neither did the words wait for music nor music for words. This in my humble opinion is also the process of the birth of a Rabindra Song.

Gurudev was Viswa Kavi. He was in tune with the infinite Manifestation itself. His poems therefore contain not one but multiple images. All these are reflected in his music. This aspect of his poetry poses a very important problem before the teacher of music. The teacher, unless he infuses the spirit of the poetic expression in the student can never lead him or her to that wonderful and many splendoured World of Music which Gurudev has created. Rabindra Music demands from a music teacher a different kind of inner illumination. The teacher has to live spiritually through the experience in the song. And each song is a different emotional experience and a different musical experience. It very subtly obeys the eternal laws of music. This is like something one finds in nature. Nature too abides by certain eternal laws. Yet each creation in nature is different. No two roses are alike. They are different and similar at the same time. This is also true of Rabindra Sangeet. It has a significant character and even a discipline of its own. For example, a Rabindra song may suggest its affinity to, let us say, Raag Behaag. But with a changing mood, a musical phrase suddenly flies away from Behaag. This take off does not, however, hurt the pattern of Behaag. It is as light as a butterfly taking off from one flower to another. All this has to be felt by the teacher. It is only then that he can make the student feel it. It is not just teaching to pick up the tune. It is not correct to say that in Rabindra Sangeet music is used as a vehicle to carry words. This is partially true of poets who write songs and hand them over to music composers to set them to tunes. In Raag-pradhan music many a time words come as helpful consonants to aid the development of Raag. Here the throat is used as a Kantha-Veena. The consonents act the way

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a mizrab does on a stringed instrument. It is entirely a different, also a very rich and wonderful realm of music. But in Rabindra Sangeet, the otherwise abstract swaras have a destined duty to perform. The poet has visualised the experience in music and word at the same moment. One who can recapture this moment alone can do justice to a Rabindra song. One must bear in mind that Art itself is a matter of realization. Mastery over technique can go to make an excellant craftsman.

This however does not mean that learning Rabindra Sangeet is a rigorous task. Far from it. Gurudev wanted everyone to sing. The best way left to a singer therefore is to surrender totally to Rabindra Music and go on singing with all his heart. A moment of realization is bound to come and brighten his inner being.

Santida's book offers a lamp for such seekers. It also reveals and illuminates a number of less known sources which inspired the Poet. It also deals with various aspects of Indian Music and the teaching of music in schools and colleges. The articles in this collection were mainly intended as lectures. Santida had made his points clearer at some stages by actual demonstrations. One misses this aspect in a printed book. In spite of this, the lectures carry a good deal of information not only about Rabindra Sangeet but also about Indian Music.

Lovers of music should feel grateful to Santida for his work.

P.L. DESHPANDE

Dated
December 26, 1975

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PREFACE

Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore, though primarily a poet, was also a philosopher, a god-fearing man, an unequalled writer, a true patriot. He was the inventor of the revolutionary educational concepts of the twentieth century, a believer in international understanding, artist, composer of songs, singer, actor and the mainspring of the new dance-movement in this country at the same time. A unique combination of diverse qualities made his genius something rare in the history of the world.

The achievements of Gurudev Rabindranath as a litterateur philosopher, artist and patriot have been evaluated and discussed much more than his other qualities. Particularly, the novel manner in which Gurudev had integrated music, dance, drama and the fine arts in his educational system adopted at the school and college levels of Visva-Bharati University, has not been at all properly evaluated. These ideas created new trends in educational programming in the present age. His work as a composer of songs and music and as the creator of music-drama (opera) and dance-drama (Nritya-Natya) has also been neglected. Nobody has attempted to show that these qualities had a definite place in the make up of the poet's personality.

I was brought to Santiniketan by my parents in the year 1910, when I was only six months. I was admitted to the school in 1915. Since then in addition to my regular studies, I had the rare opportunity of participating in music and dance programmes and dramatic performances conducted in the school by Gurudev and Dinendranath Tagore at Visva-Bharati, and in 1930, I was appointed in this department as a teacher of Music and Dance.

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Gurudev Rabindranath had made a successful experiment of integrating music and dance with academic studies during the last forty years of his life. Having direct involvement in this experiment for the last twenty five years I began to write my experiences and Gurudev had encouraged me in this endeavour also. With his blessing I started writing a book in Bengali entitled "Rabindra Sangit", which was published by Visva-Bharati two years after his death. Since then I have published some more books as well as several articles in various journals, all in Bengali.

Having no command over either English or Hindi, I was unable to write in these languages even when some friends asked me to do so. But in order to encourage me, respected, late Indira Devi Chowdhurani, niece of Gurudev and the former Vice-Chancellor of Visva-Bharati, kindly translated some portions of my aforesaid book into English, for which I am deeply indebted to her. Also Sri Viswajit Roy, an ex-student of Visva-Bharati and a journalist, willingly translated some of my articles into English, for which I express my thanks and appreciation. The items translated by both of them have been arranged in the form of the present book.

The well-known writer, dramatist, actor and lover of Indian Music of Maharashtra, Sri P.L. Deshpande, kindly consented to read the manuscript of this book and has written a foreward which has increased the value of my work. Dr. K.M. Varma of Visva-Bharati has helped me with constructive criticism and advice while I was preparing the book. I express my gratitude for his help.

Finally, I am extremely greatful to the authorities of Sangeet Natak Akademi, New Delhi for their kind acceptance of this book for publication by the Akademi.

SANTIDEV GHOSE

SANTINIKETAN,
WEST BENGAL, INDIA,
JULY 31, 1978

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CONTENTS

1. Music and Dance in Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore's Educational Philosophy

2. The "Giti-Natya" (Music-Drama) and the "Nritya-Natya" (Dance-Drama) of Gurudev Rabindranath

3. The place of Dance, Drama and Music in Gurudev Rabindranath's system of Comprehensive Education

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Place of Gurudev Rabindranath in Indian Music

Gurudev Rabindranath was a poet, a writer, a dramatist, an actor, an educationist, a painter, a spiritual devotee, a lover of humanity and also a composer of songs and music. In all spheres of life he expressed himself to such an extent that his influence will be felt for a long time to come in the cultural history of India and particularly of Bengal. Gurudev's life was the ideal of a fully-developed personality. One integral part of that life was that of a Music lover which I shall endeavour to represent here. Indian history has yet to produce a composer who could express life in so many varied forms so very successfully.

Gurudev Rabindranath first tried his hand at composing songs when he was a boy of thirteen or fourteen : that flow of inspiration, once started, never stopped till a few months before his death. Throughout a stretch of about sixty-five years, he composed more than two thousand songs.

This power of composition did not come upon him all of a sudden. The musical atmosphere of his home in boyhood helped him a good deal in this respect. His childhood and youth were spent in an atmosphere congenial to Hindustani music. Classical

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Hindustani songs held a special place of honour in his family. His elder brothers were always engrossed in the practice of such songs. They even composed new Bengali songs on those models. In different religious functions and festivals held in their family, the children always had to sing those songs. Classical Ustads or master-singers of those times used to coach them. Over and above this, many celebrated Ustads were invited to give demonstrations. They came and stayed in the house. Amongst these even the names of famous Ustads like Moula Bux are heard. The musical-life of Gurudev thus began in such an atmosphere of classical Hindustani music. At a very early age he learnt from his elder brothers how to compose Bengali songs with the help of classical Hindi Music. Though his lessons in composition started at the age of thirteen or fourteen, it is only when he was seventeen or eighteen that he attempted to compose songs entirely on his own.

But it must be understood that his songs are not of the same type as classical Hindi songs. Though they are composed under their influence, it is a well-known fact that they are not of the same genus. Therefore, the question arises what is their place in classical Indian music ? To what class do they belong ? In order to answer that question we must know first of all the different types of Indian songs.

Sages of old in our country, divided Indian music into two categories : One they called "Marga" and the other "Deshi".

Songs accompanied by Alapa and if they are bound by rules they are called "Marga" and songs that women, children, shepherds and kings fondly and freely sang in their own countries are called "Deshi".

They said that the above mentioned "Marga" Sangita had become obsolete in India since a long time.

Most probably the tradition of the Marga Sangita of ancient times has mixed profoundly with the Classical Hindustani and Karnatic music, and the songs with Alapa-Tan and Vistar of this age may be a successor of the same tradition.

In their present form, we see in classical Hindustani songs only a dominance of the notes or the ornamental flourishes of

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ragas and raginis. Ustads confine words within raginis and give prominence to the virtuousity shown in the pattern of Tan, Bistara and Alapa. Though the ragas and raginis are set in tune with the basic meaning of the words, the singers give prominence only to the raginis. And we accept the singers who are adept in this style as the best artists of Indian Music.

From the description, it can be well imagined that by "Deshi" they meant some such type of songs as we find in regional languages. Therefore, it can be assumed that in this type of songs, words had a very high place. Raginis and verses are equally important, as they made the subtle inner meaning of the words clearer. Like "Marga" Sangita, raginis of Deshi-Sangita did not rise above the words but proceeded hand-in-hand with them.

"Deshi" Sangita is also bound by some rules. But it must be remembered that, it is not of the same type. That is, it would be the same thing if "Dhrupad" and "Khyal" were not sung with flourishes of notes, but with plain divisions of "Asthayi", "Antara", "Sanchari" and "Abhoga". This type of song could be sung without violating any of the rules of the Ragini. But this rule does not apply in the case of classical music. Thus, in other words it can be said that songs in any of the provincial languages of India are "Deshi" songs, and when these songs are sung according to the modes of ancient "Marga"-Sangita, that is with flourishes of notes they are called classical Indian songs. According to historians, "Dhrupad" was once well-known as a "Deshi" style of song in the Gwalior region. Singers imbued with the ideals of "Marga"-Sangita made it follow that ideal and transformed it into classical music. In the eighteenth century, talented composers like "Sadarang" and "Adarang", the descendants of "Tansen", introduced "Khyal" by remodelling "Zikir," or "Khawali"—a type of prevalent "Deshi" song in the ancient pattern of the "Marga" Sangita. "Tappa" formerly used to be sung by the camel-drivers of the Punjab. The same songs were afterwards transformed into classical Hindi songs due to the encouragement given by the classical singers. "Thumri" which was once an untouchable, outcast among the exponents of classical singers has now become extremely popular with them. Only those songs which are not sung according to the ideals of ancient gayaki of the classical singers, are denied recognition to-day as classical songs.

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Though the ancient "Marga" and "Deshi"-Sangita differed according to the Sastras, yet they were never antagonistic or separate in nature. The one enriched the other. Whenever the tune of some "Deshi" song sounded pleasing to the ears of classical singers, then and there they took it up, analysed it, found its fundamental structure, i.e. its "arohi", "avarohi", "vadi" "vivadi", "samadisvara", "pakara" etc., and placed it among the ragas and raginis with a given name. Thus by knowing the structure of "Deshi" tunes it was easy to sing them according to the system of "Alapa" or in the style of "Khyal". Again, it has been seen that ragas or raginis composed with the help of "Deshi" tunes have encouraged composers of pure "Desi" songs in other ages. Then they did not sing the ragini with ornamentation like Ustads, but used only as much as was required for the words of the songs. Therefore, it can be seen that the same tune or ragini is placed in the group of "Marga" or "Deshi"-Sangita, according to the style in which it is sung.

As we find the use of four and two stanzas in "Dhrupad" and "Khyal", so we also observe the same thing in the "Deshi" songs of different languages too. In this respect, no difference can be noticed between the two systems. It appears that it is the "Deshi" sangita which is responsible for the division of Stanzas that is now prevalent in classical Hindustani Music. Many talas of classical Indian songs are also derived from this type of "Deshi" songs.

For ages, the songs of Bengal have developed according to the ideal of the "Deshi" sangita. In Bengali songs abstract music like "Alapa" had never been encouraged. Bengal preferred to adorn words rather than the tunes. They did not use words as mere props for showing off the supremacy of raginis. This is why we find that even "Dhrupad", "Khyal", "Tappa" and "Thumri", which were composed in Bengali in close imitation of classical Hindi songs, had an easier and simplier form of gayaki that gave prominence to the words. Perhaps this is the reason why Bengali songs modelled upon "Dhrupad", "Khyal", "Tappa" and "Thumri" did not find favour with the exponents of classical music, Bengali or otherwise.

The songs of Gurudev Rabindranath are composed in the style and form of "Deshi" Sangita. In other words the various

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emotions expressed in his verse were set to tune by Gurudev to make them more telling. Thus frills and flourishes did not figure prominently in his songs. As they are composed in the style of "Deshi" songs, they have found access to all strata of Bengali society.

During the process of setting his own verses to music in various rhythms, Gurudev was helped to a great extent by classical Hindustani ragas and raginis and talas. But even then, the style of singing is simple as in "Deshi" songs. No amplification of raginis is allowed—some of his songs are based upon the kritis of Tyagaraja and Dikshitar of south India, but even then the Bengali style of singing transformed the original completely.

As classical raga-sangita requires hard training, it is difficult for the general public to appreciate it. To surmount this difficulty, "Deshi" songs are composed in different provinces of India with the help of raginis. The songs of Gurudev are very helpful to the people of Bengal in this respect. In other words, he has been able to make the public appreciate classical Raginis through the medium of his songs, without going through arduous professional training.

Though the chief inspiration of his songs came from classical Hindustani music, Gurudev has a special tender corner in his heart for the tunes which can be called Bengal's very own. He picked up tunes and styles from different strata of Bengali society and gave them an honoured place in his songs. These songs are now winning the hearts of Bengalis in new forms and creations. Gurudev's songs have helped a lot in removing the contempt that classical musicians of Bengal had for these types of songs.

As I have mentioned before, in all ages classical Hindi music has enriched its own store of ragas and raginis by collecting materials from "Deshi" songs. Likewise, exponents of classical music can also profit from the tunes of Gurudev's songs. Some of these tunes were created by the combinations of different raginis of classical music In many songs, Bengali "Deshi" tunes and folk-music are mixed with classical ragas and raginis. If classical musicians of today can like the geniuses of old, take them up and find out their fundamental structure, then it would as can be hoped, enrich the

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existing wealth of Raginis, further. Thus newly created ragas would perhaps find a place in what Matanga calls "Uttama" or the highest class of Ragas. I believe, that they possess the possibilities of being sung in the style of "Alapa". Gurudev also created some new talas. Now it is upto the exponents of classical music whether they would adopt them into their system by adding various rhythmical embellishments.

Another special feature of the songs of Gurudev is the diversity of their subject-matter. On analysing the songs of each of all those composers who have become famous in Bengal within the last two hundred years, it will be found that their subject-matter is less varied. Most of them composed songs on two or three themes. But even within that narrow compass they were not equally successful. Perhaps he who succeeded in love-songs failed in devotional ones ; while another who might have shone in composing devotional songs had been unsuccessful with love-songs. Gurudev is an exception. His songs are not confined to two or three subjects only. They are multifarious in their themes and most of them conform to the highest standard. Why mention Bengal alone? In the diversity of their subject-matter, the songs of Gurudev form a class apart in comparison with those of any other Indian composer of "Deshi" Music. We do not know of any single composer in India who has adopted so many themes and such a big number of Ragas to bring out the nature of those themes.

His songs of religious or spiritual sentiments, his songs of different aspects of love, his patriotic and seasonal songs, heroic songs, constitute an eternal treasure in the store-house of Bengali songs. Over and above this, it can be said with confidence that by composing three full length music-dramas (operas), like "Valmiki-Pratibhā", "Kāl-Mrigayā", "Māyārkhelā", and three full length dance-dramas such as "Chitrāngadā," "Shyāmā" and "Chandālikā," he has ushered in a new era in the history of Bengali music. The time has not yet come for our countrymen to understand fully the consummate creative power he has shown in the composing of these music-dramas. He has also composed songs of commemoration and inauguration, of invocation, songs of youth, of fellowship, of play, of village road, of movements, of birth, marriage and death,

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of consolation, of laughter, of sowing and reaping, of house-warming, of tree planting, of machine, of the new year's beginning and the old year's ending and all the different functions and festivities are celebrated in his songs. In short, he has beautified the drab day-to-day life of Bengal with the charming melody of his songs.

In this connection I would like to draw attention to Gurudev's unique contribution to group singing in our country. Group singing in modern urban society has little place—clearly a most vital social deficiency How have we come to such a pass ?—in order to find an answer to this question, we must try to understand clearly the real form of our town-society.

Before the beginning of the British Period, the Village formed the centre of Indian civilization—and it was based upon religion. Up to that time, whenever necessary, scholars, dancers, musicians and artists would be collected from the villages to come to the courts of kings and noblemen.

The British came to rule in India with various wonderful scientific appliances. On their arrival, they either founded new cities or transformed old ones according to their needs, and lived in them. They did not go to the villages. Attracted by the wealth, the comforts and conveniences and the novelty of towns, the bearers and custodians of village culture left their village homes and flocked to the cities. Only those who were unable to come to towns remained in the villages, holding on percariously to the sluggish stream of village culture. A new social order was founded in towns, with the admixture of European civilization. This society could not procure much from Europe with which to boast of before the judgement seat of the world, and at the same time they were absolutely cut off from our village culture, because they looked down upon it. Besides this, the society of towns gave up the religion which formed the basis of village society, and became secular. Because they were taught to look upon European civilization and culture as being ideal, a feeling of contempt against village culture took on a stronger turn and they refused to accept many village customs which were worthy of acceptance. One such was group singing. Though the town folk were familiar with the

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European style of Group-singing, yet on account of its intricate system of harmony they did not find it possible to adopt it. On the other hand, the Group-singing prevalent in villages, which had now become a part of folk-music was not considered acceptable either. For this reason, Group-singing remained beyond the pale of the city people, for many years.

This deficiency began to be noticed particularly in Bengal during the Independence Movement in the country, about the year 1867. At that time English-educated Indians were at the helm of the new movement for Independence, and the first impulse to compose National songs arose in their minds. The main object of composing such songs was to awaken the spirit of patriotic fervour by singing of many voices together in group-singing. Ever since the songs expressing the urge for freedom of the country and people of India, have been composed by Bengalis with a view to be sung in unison by many voices. The first patriotic song sung in group-singing in Bengali, was composed by Gurudev Rabindranath's elder brother, Satyendranath Tagore.

When Gurudev Rabindranath's father Maharshi Devendranath, revised the form of religious service held in the Adi-Brahmo-samaj, during the early stage of the National Independence agitation he composed solo and group songs to be used as an essential part of the divine service. The group songs were sung by the children of his own family. These songs were set word by word to the tunes of Hindustani Dhrupads and Khyals. Because they had to be sung in unison, only the four parts were sung simply one after the other, without the addition of any flourishes or classical ornamentations of tune and time. Gradually the members of the other Brahmo Samajas, adopted this style of singing hymns in their religious services. Thus up to the beginning of the 20th century group-singing became prevalent amongst English-educated Indians in cities, through patrotic songs and hyms. Group-singing became still more popular and widepread in 1905, during the agitation which followed the Partition of Bengal. Under the influence of this Partition, the city-people felt a hankering for being connected intimately with the village-folk. Behind this there was a strong influence of Gurudev Rabindranath. Through his writings and poems and speeches, he tried hard to turn the minds of Bengalis towards the village. It can easily be seen from

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the national songs then composed, how effective these efforts were. The composers mostly tried to set their songs to the tune of village folk-songs. Gurudev Rabindranath was the leader of this movement. He stirred up a fervent patriotic zeal in people's minds by his national songs set to village tunes and in village style. Before 1905 many National songs had been composed, but they had not been set to popular melodies. The tunes mostly followed the classical style.

I have already stated above that it was due to the inspiration of Gurudev's family, that Group-singing became popular amongst town-people. But it was Gurudev who made this style more extensive and broad-based. The advance which Gurudev made along this line by composing not only patriotic and religious songs, but songs on various other subjects as well, has not been equalled since, by any other Composer. He did the largest amount of work in this line during the last 40 years of his active life in Santiniketan and Visva-Bharati. In order to provide the entertainment for the students and teachers, he had to compose numerous group-songs suitable for various occasions, and today these songs have become indispensable for life at Santiniketan. They were and are still extremely popular among the students of Santiniketan and I may point out, that of late the educated public of Bengal has also taken them up. The words and ideas of these songs are as inspiring as their tunes, and the rhythms are lively. While they are quite easy and suitable for group-singing, they are not lacking in the variety of tunes or modes. Moreover, the words and ideas have raised them to such a height of creative excellence they have become the universal treasure of all men for all time These group-songs of Gurudev are not composed according to the method of European harmonised songs, but have to be sung in the style of Indian Village group-songs. All the same, there is a difference between the two.

The village composers do not pay much attention to the conformity of the tunes with the words, but sing most of their songs in a simple tune in quick time. In composing songs Gurudev used to adapt the tune and rhythm to the sense of the words. Similarly he set his patriotic songs to various tunes and rhythms in accordance with the spirit of the words.

Owing to the influence of European education, the horizon of thought of city-dwellers had become much wider. This impress is

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very evident in their lyrics, and is also to be commonly met with in their songs. So it is only natural that this influence should be noticed in their group-songs. This impress is also to be found in the various songs of Gurudev; such as seasonal songs, working songs, play songs, the song in praise of Santiniketan, songs for the convocation ceremony, the foundation songs to be sung on the foundation day of the Asram, the opening songs of various cultural functions, tree-planting, ploughing festival and songs on path etc. These songs of Santiniketan have now become the songs of the educated people in towns and are being sung with delight by various bands on various occasions.

In the end I shall describe the creative process and the inspiration of the songs composed by Gurudev Rabindranath. Among all his artistic creations music gave him the greatest joy. He was an inspired devotee of the goddess of Music. That inspiration never failed him in the 63 year-long musical life.

In no other country, perhaps, the meaning or the purpose of music, has been realised so profoundly as it was by our ancient scholars. The vedic seers, we are told, meditated to know how music originates, why it moves the soul, fills the heart with an undefinable ecstasy and makes the mind wistful without any cause whatsoever. Going deep down within the self they found that there pulsates, all through, a rhythm of "Prana" deep within the universe and music is nothing but its resultant emotion, intimately felt within our heart. They likewise came to know that all human life is nothing but a song set to the tune of Eternity, that of the sun, the moon, the stars and the planets, plants and trees as well, each and everyone contributes its unique note to the cosmic song. And we find that from time immemorial this unique "Sadhana" has been practised in India, without any break anywhere. The greatest exponent of this Sadhana in our own time has been Gurudev Rabindranath. He pursued the same path as the ancient seers had sought and found his deliverence in music itself.

The term "Sadhana" applied to Gurudev Rabindranath carries its own significance, for although he had learned from great Ustads, in his early days, he never, like other composers became himself an Ustad. He did not take to composing so as to invent something

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new. Neither did he compose his songs impelled by any worldly ambition, lured by the possibility of name and fame. His songs welled up out of an inmost feeling of joy, impelled solely by an inherent impulse to sing. It is therefore that his songs bear the mark of a creation. Anyone who has come into contact with Gurudev Rabindranath, know how constant, how deep and intense had been the inspiration of music in him.

Even in his latter days, we had occasion to observe the great artist in his moods of creation, when, surcharged as he was with inspiration, he would go on composing songs, one after another. He never felt either the need of instrumental accompaniment or that of preliminary exercises in raga or raginis. Long-forgotten tunes that once he had learned in his youth would come flocking to him like a troupe of playful children from quite unknown regions of his mind. Composed in a song they appeared strange and new. But Gurudev Rabindranath never was apologetic or felt that some corrections were necessary. He was glad that a new form had emerged out of combination of word and tune. And, at times, his absorption was so complete that tunes which came to him unbidden, having fulfilled their purpose, would disappear as unexpectedly without leaving any trace behind. They, moreover, did not wholly observe the rules of shastras when they came. On the whole, the composition of a song was not a task that he set to himself. The singer that dwelt in the poet's heart inspired and made him sing.

Often enough, he would lose his sleep at night and wake up to a tune that came floating from somewhere to his inner ear. He could never sleep again until he had ensnared that birds of paradise in poignant phrases and perfect rhythms. How intense was the feeling of bereavement if by any chance it was lost! Days of rain would amass clouds of music on the summits of his mind and, as if peacocks, would spread their feathers and begin to dance. The world, bathed in light and washed with dew in early autumn, would profoundly stir his mind and he would express his feeling only through his songs. The cool and deep shadow of death over the sky and the earth of winter would likewise demand expression in his songs. And of course, the advent of spring made him utterly ecstatic. Numerous songs bear witness to that fact. The summer

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in its scorching severity sang to him the song of the sannyasin and he would tune up his instrument to its relentless pitch. Morning, noon or evening, night, either unfathomably deep in its darkness or overflowing with the enchantment of moonlight, every phase of day and night, would reveal to him some aspect or other of the Absolute Bliss which shines in Nature to inspire him to sing. The order and discipline that he usually imposed on himself and his daily life he totally forsook, when he was caught in these moods of creativeness.

He could hearken to the hymn of adoration within the very heart of the noise and the turmoil of a crowded market. The stars, travelling, each one on its lonely track of light, suggested to him the song of the eternal Traveller, which was his soul. The leaves on the branches of trees, pattered on by wind and rain, were to him strings of the vina played on by the Unseen Musician. Death would ask him to sing the song of joy and fulfilment.

To be brief, Life and Nature, in all their diverse beauty and joy, had never before been so intimately felt or so luminously expressed. Let me conclude with the following passage from one of Gurudev's addresses to his pupils at Santiniketan :

"Vina as 'vina' has nothing to separate it from other objects : it pours out its music only when the Master is there to play upon it. It is the joy of the Master which is expressed through songs, and gives us joy. The Master is eternally playing his world-'vina'. But unless my own vina, my heart, responds to it, how am I to glimpse his beautific face, screened and covered if I be with envy, malice, greed, selfishness, enmity and all sorts of discords ? We forget our petty selves when there is music in our life, when we see the Master who plays on the intruments of our heart. Then sorrow does not overwhelm us, loss does not make us poor, the ultimate meaning of our life is revealed as the joy of the Master. And that realisation is Mukti".

In a song Gurudev Rabindranath said :—

"When I see the world as a song

I know and comprehend him the best of all.

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Then the language of his love
fills the sky with light.

Then every particle of dust
speaks to me with his voice.

Then He stands aloof no longer,
but takes His seat within my soul,

Then my heart quivers in ecstacy
with all the blades of grass
that He has made.

Then the beauty of form
overflows the limit of its lines
and dissolves in an ocean of joy

And the whole world whispers to me
its inmost secrets."

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The "Giti-Natya" (Music-Drama) and the "Nritya-Natya" (Dance-Drama) of Gurudev Rabindranath

The subject for our discussion is the Music-Drama and the Dance-Drama of Gurudev Tagore. Before going on to that I shall give in short an account of the Dance tradition of Bengal and the types of Music we find with it. Though we come to know from the descriptions in "Mahyana Buddhist" and "Vaishnava" literature that Music-Dramas and dance with music were performed in those days yet that tradition has now altogether disappeared.

In the Moslem-period skilled dancers who knew music too, were engaged as court-dancers at the durbars or courts of the Nawabs, Zamindars and generally well-do-do people. This custom extended even upto the British period. These dancers (came from a class of people) known as "Baijis. With Wazid Ali Shah, the the last Nawab of Lucknow, who came to stay at "Metiabaruj,', near Calcutta, after the Sepoy Mutiny, came a large number of reputed "Baijis" from Uttar Pradesh, and they gradually spread out into the different parts of Bengal.

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Right from the Moslem-period, down to the first quarter of the modern age, the songs and dances of Baijis played the most important part in the entertainments arranged by the rich people on the festive occasions like Pujas or social functions like marriage, etc. In fact, the absence of such dancers on those occasions signified a loss of social prestige of the rich people.

A different class of dancers, known as "Khemtawalis", or "Nachnis" used to entertain the village-people in their festivals and other celebrations. This class of "Khemtawalis" or "Nachnis" are to be seen even now in different parts of Bengal. In fact, they are the cheaper counter-parts of the urban "Baijis". Their songs are in Bengali and based on various ragas and raginis dealing with the theme of love.

Towards the middle of the 19th century another type of dancer was created by the Bengali theatre which was modelled after the European stage. The main techniques of these dancers were no doubt, based on those of the "Baijis" and "Khemtawalis; but in their group-dances the influence of the choreography of the European Ballet was quite discernible. This style of dancing was also associated with the Bengali stage till the first quarter of the twentieth century, but later it went out of fashion. It is still popular, although in a less degree than before, in the "Yatra"-performances of the villages, but it is evident that this form of dancing is losing ground even in the Yatra-performances and the trend makes one think that this dance-form will in near future, be totally extinct. In theatres mainly the girls danced, while in the "Yatra"-performances men danced in women's attire. The accompaniment to the dances of the urban "Baijis" was Tabla, Sarangi and Harmonium; in theatres Harmonium, Flute, Violin and Clarionet were also used, while in "Yatra"-performances Sarangi and Violin became obsolete.

In "Yatra" now-a-days the western musical instruments like Clarionet and Cornet have come into fashion apart from Harmonium, Tabla, Dhol (Drum), Mandira and Cymbal. In theatres or in "Yatras" dancers have always danced with songs.

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This, in short, is the picture of the professional dancing of Bengal.

In the villages of Bengal another type of dancing has been prevalent. This is not a variety of the professional-dance, but the dance of the village-community. In modern times we refer to it as folk-dance. This form of dancing in most cases is the group-dance either of men or of women. These dances have originated around the festivals and social celebrations of the village-community. The "Charak Puja" and the "Dharma Thakur Puja" fall in the month of Chaitra and Baisakh of the year. On those festive days people, in many parts of Bengal, perform various types of dance with songs or with drums. These dances are mostly performed by men. The acting with mudras, as in "Kathakali" or "Bharat-anatyam" are not to be found in these dances. Technically, they are very simple. Dhak, Dhol and Cymbal are generally used as accompaniments to these dances.

The group dance with stick or handkerchief in hand is quite popular among some moslems in West Bengal with "Jari" songs. "Raibenshe" was a sort of a martial-dance of a class of fighting people. The specimen of this is still to be found. It is danced by a group of men either empty-handed or with swords and shields in hand. There are no songs with it, Dhak and Cymbal accompany these dances in order to keep the rhythm.

On the occasion of some festivals or Puja-celebrations in various parts of Bengal, groups of men while playing upon big drums, dance, conforming to the same rhythm.

In villages until recently, dance with songs formed an integral part of the celebrations of various feminine rites, or marriage ceremonies.

When the new bride stepped into her husband's home, the women used to test her dancing skill. The bride had to dance alone to a song and the tala kept by the drum.

Even now this sort of bride's dance and dances to celebrate various observances of women are prevalent in the Bengali-speaking areas of Assam. These sorts of dance of the village-woman are

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not technically complicated. These dances consist of simple steps and movements with the rhythm of songs and the tala kept by drum. The dances of the village women are almost totally free from the influence of the "Baijis" or the "Khemtawalis", especially in the group-dance.

For instance, the dance with the hip-movements does not find a place in men's community dancing. But when men dance dressed like women, they indulge in hip-movements like the "Khemtawalis", even though they are not professionals. They actually emulate the "Khemtawalis".

An altogether different type of dance is to be found among the "Baul"-community of Bengal. This form of dance is not meant for groups but for individuals. With single-stringed instrument, "Ektara" in one hand and a small drum like "Baya" tied around the waist and played upon by the hand, a pair of big "Nupoor" or anklets of brass on the feet, the "Bauls" dance and sing. They play on the Ektara for keeping a standing note for their songs and by playing on the drum they bring out various rhythms to which they dance. The extraordinary skill in song, dance and in playing instruments at the same time which the "Bauls" show, are hardly to be found anywhere else. They represent an ancient tradition of music and dance of Bengal.

"Bhadu" is another dance which has a wide vogue in West Bengal. In the month of Bhadra the Village People compose songs in remembrance of "Bhadu", an ancient princess, and sing in a group in the streets. The group is led by a boy dressed as a girl, who dances with hip-movements to the rhythm of the songs and the dhol and the cymbal. The emphasis in this dance is not laid on acting but on the rhythmic steps.

In West Bengal, the play of marionettes is also to be found. The puppets, varying in size between two and two-and-a-half feet, are tied on the top of a pole, with strings attached to them. In this play those who make the puppets dance with songs, hide themselves behind a curtain of about a man's height and cannot be seen from the front. A separate man is needed for each of the marionettes. The themes of these puppet-plays are based on the

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stories from mythology, "Ramayana" and "Mahabharata" and the puppets represent the characters of the story. When there is a song they move to the rhythm of it. Instruments employed in the dance are, Harmonium, Tabla-Baya, Cymbal, Clarionet and Violin. Men, concealed behind the curtain walk along and pull the strings, to make the puppets dance and act. From the front puppets appear as acting and dancing by themselves. This song and dance is now on the wane for want of proper patronage and interest.

Chhou, a type of dance with masks, is still popular in the district of Purulia. This dance is, really a kind of dance-drama. They include many characters and are generally based on the stories from "Ramayana", "Mahabharata" and mythology. The instruments employed in this dance are Dhak, Dhol, Sanai and Cymbal. The actors express themselves through dance movements to the rhythm of the instruments. This dance is for the menfolk only and even the feminine roles are played by men.

Because of this, masculine vigour is to be found in all the movements of this dance. A man, generally links up different parts of the story with the help of songs, and he begins the dance-drama with an invocation to god "Ganesh".

Bengal is inhabited also by many tribal people. Among these, the "Santals" are most noted for their love of music and dance. On the occasion of all festivals the men and women, alike participate in the dances. Their music and the rhythm and the movements of their dances are quite unique. Their dances do not resemble those of other communities in Bengal. Group dance shows their typical characteristic. The "Santal" women dance holding each other by the waist and to their own songs, accompanied by Madal, Nakara (Drum), flute and cymbals played by men. The dance of the "Santali" men is also seen on the occasions of marriages. Their dance is actually of the open space.

The new society, which developed in the British-period, around the big cities, was, for diverse reasons sundered from the village society. Thus, as in many other things, the dance tradition of the village community also went out of favour with the urban

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society. This new society could not, at the same time, accept the dance of the "Baijis" or that of the theatre which had degraded into a form of vulgar pleasure for the rich people. Those forms of dance were considered by this enlightened society of the city, as despicably low types of immoral art; and this attitude ultimately made them totally forget the place of dance in human society. The allergy to the dance tradition of the village, on the other hand resulted in the extinction of many forms of folk dance.

These were the conditions prevalent in Bengal before Gurudev Tagore up took the cause of dance. In 1919 he first introduced "Manipuri"-dance at Santiniketan School. In 1921, he started a College of Music and Dance in "Visva-Bharati" for higher studies, and gave dance and songs an equal place with the other subjects of learning. In the beginning, his efforts in this direction were far from appreciated. But when in 1926 "Natir Puja" (The Worship of the Danseuse) was staged with dances, the enlightened section of the society of Calcutta, realised the value of Gurudev's efforts. Thus for the first time he drew the attention of the city people to the necessity and importance of dancing. This removed the difficulties that the girls of respectable families experienced when they wanted to dance in public; and hence they gradually took to the art of dancing. Meanwhile further developments also took place.

Uday Shankar was first seen in Culcutta in 1930. His performance raised a good deal of interest and enthusiasm and deeply influenced the urban society.

Since then many young men and women have followed Shankar and appeared on the stage.

In 1931, another movement was initiated by late Gurusaday Dutta, a member of the I.C.S. His primary aim was to revive the decadent folk-dances of Bengal and with modifications to suit the changed times, to give them currency among the educated people of the cities. It was due to his untiring zeal that the manly "Raibenshe" and "Dhali" dance of Birbhum, the "Jari" dance of the moslems of Bengal became well known among the city-people. He tried hard to introduce these dances in the schools of Bengal and for propagating them he also established teachers' training Schools to train up dance teachers.

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But due to his death and the absence of a zealous director the movement has suffered a great set-back.

Today many young men and women have taken up dancing professionally by learning "Manipuri", "Kathakali", "Kathak" and "Bharatanatyam" dances. Many schools have also been established for this purpose. The Rabindra Bharati University in Calcutta, sponsored by the State Government, has arranged for higher studies in classical dances. Many Government aided and private schools have also made provisions for imparting instructions in dancing. But the community dancing for rejoicing as practised by the village people, is yet to find a place in the enlightened society of the cities. But a new type of community dance that originated around the spring festival or the tree plantation ceremony, is prevalent among the students of Visva-Bharati in Santiniketan.

In Bengal, today, the educated urban community evince keen interest in Gurudev's dance-dramas and the dance accompanying his songs. Gurudev was all in favour of this type of dancing and had to compose a good many dance-dramas The most popular form of dance-composition modelled after the European ballet, is a contribution of Uday Shankar to "India". Uday Shankar adapted dance, though very much later on, in the shadow plays and this has been enthusiastically accepted by the people.

At this juncture, i.e., in thirties, Gurudev wrote dance-dramas which I shall now dwell on in some detail. Here it must be noted that the pre-eminence of Gurudev as a poet has overshadowed his contribution to dramatic literature. But to say that Gurudev was the most versatile dramatist in Bengal would not be an exaggeration.

At the age of 21 Gurudev was found for the first time trying his hand in writing dramas. Since then, till the age of 77 he had continually written more than fifty dramas, of different kinds, short and long, employing diverse techniques.

These dramas on mythological, historical, social and lyrical subjects have been written in blank-verse, as well as in prose in

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ordinary conversations and in the form of music-dramas or dance-dramas. Apart from them, there are certain other dramas which are mainly based on songs ; which are linked up by short dialogue, in accordance with the subject. None of his general dramas, however, is without songs excepting a few.

So far as the technique of composition is concerned, there is hardly any difference between a music-drama and a dance-drama. None of these types of dramas contain conversational dialogue. Dialogues in them are in blank-verse and are set to tune and tala. As mentioned earlier Gurudev has written three Music-dramas namely, Valmiki-Pratibha, Kalmrigaya Mayarkhela, and three Dance-dramas, such as Citrangada, Syama and Chandalika. Of these the first three were composed between 1881 and 1888, and the last three between 1936 and 1938. In his career as a dramatist, his first drama was the music-drama, "Valmiki-Pratibha" and the last was the dance-drama viz., "Chandalika". But why has he called the first three as the music-dramas and the last three, as the dance-dramas ? It is because the first three were meant only to be sung like European operas. These dramas were enacted in those days with movement and gestures employed in the general dramas. Hence, they have been named the music-dramas "Gita-Natya". The last three dramas of his later years were the outcome of his desire to enact the stories through dance that is why they were named the dance-dramas or "Nritya-Natya".

In the music-dramas, the players act while singing the songs by themselves in a conversational manner. As this is not possible in a dance-drama a group of singers has to be employed who sing from the background to aid the dances like in "Kathakali" or "Manipuri" Dance-plays.

When Gurudev composed the music-dramas, he belonged to the educated society of Calcutta. At that time any sort of lesson in Indian dance was totally unknown to that society. Dance was a taboo for the boys and girls of that society. So, while composing the music-dramas, he could not conceive of using the form of dance in his dramas. But towards the later part of his life, when the dance took a prominent place in the general education at Santiniketan and Visva-Bharati he wrote his dance-dramas to be enacted by

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dance. In this period of his dance-dramas, he wanted to enact Mayar-Khela, a music-drama of his early period, with the medium of dancing and then he called it a dance-drama or "Nritya-Natya."

At the time of setting the tune or Ragini to the words in these dramas, Gurudev followed certain priniciples. For instance, in expressing a tumultous exhilaration there would be a sudden rise in the tune; the tune would proceed slowly with the sentiments of sorrow, a rapid tala would signify happy feeling etc.

In the music-dramas, the Tala or the rhythm should change into fast or slow according to the change in the idea or feeling, the same rhythm should not be employed throughout. While acting in Music-dramas, sometime it becomes necessary to leave out Tala altogether.

He followed the above principles while setting the words of his dramas to tune using the various Ragas and Raginis of Hindustani music as well as the various folk tunes of Bengal. These ragas, thus combined with words, revealed a new beauty.

To illustrate my point I will discribe a portion of Gurudev's "Valmiki-Pratibha" composed in 1881.

The story of the drama is based on "Ramayana". The theme is how "Ratnakar" or "Valmiki" became a great poet. Valmiki was the leader of a band of dacoits whose tyrany subjected the whole country to acute suffering. One night his companions caught a helpless girl, led astray in the dark forest and brought her before the altar of Kali, their goddess, to sacrifice her. The pathetic entreaty of the girl suddenly brought about a change in Ratnakar. He released the girl and decided not to resort to violence again, where upon his companions deserted him. Eventually goddess "Saraswati" appeared before him and told him that it was she who came before him in guise of a girl to melt his heart. Ratnakar was blessed by her to earn eternal fame as a poet and he became "Valmiki."

Here is a translation of the portion.

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(A small girl in the forest)

The girl — The clouds gather in the sky, darkness descends and night comes. I am tired and weary. How to return home ?

What is this thick forest I have come to ? Will you not show me the way out ? What to do in this dark night ? Alas, What will befall me ?

First Robber — Lost your way eh ? Like to find the right path? I can send you to such a place where you will live eternally happy hereafter.

All (in a roar of laughter) Ha, Ha, Ha, Ha, Ha, Ha, Ha, Ha,

Second Robber — How's that place brother ?

First Robber — Not too bad, we all will assemble there someday or other.

All — Ha, Ha, Ha, Ha, Ha, Ha, Ha, Ha,

Third Robber — Come along, let me show you the way and never shall you again wander astray.

All — Ha, Ha, Ha, Ha, Ha, Ha, Ha, Ha,

(Exit)

(Valmiki meditating before the Shrine of Kali)

(Enter the Robbers with the Girl)

Robbers — Look, sir, the fine sacrifice we have brought. Such a wouderful fish is not easily netted. Why delay, finish it off quickly.

Valmiki — Bring me my sword. Mother Kali is thirsty for blood. Go along.

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Girl — Why have you tied me, a helpless girl alone in a forest ? Save, oh save me. Have pity on this orphan, I have none to call my own.

Valmiki — What has happnend to me. I don't understand this feeling ? How has this stony heart melted and how have drops of tears appeared in my eyes ? What spell has she cast on me? Oh' all is drowned in the flood of compassion that sweeps over the desert.

First Robber — Why is this delay we don't understand ?

Second Robber — Time is being wasted.

Third Robber — It's a long time since we brought her and you have not done away with her.

Fourth Robber — What is this, I wonder ?

Valmiki — No, No, this sacrifice wont' do, search for another.

First Robber — How to get another sacrifice at this hour of night ?

Second Robber — How could you talk that way, I wonder ?

Valmiki — Listen, obey my orders. Throw off your swords, untie her shackles, and release her at once...

The portion of the drama, include the combination of the following raginis, namely Misra Mallar, Desh, Pilu, Kafi, Kanada, Jhinjhoti, Sindhu-Bhairabi, Paraj, and Deogiri. It is because of these raginis which can be sung in a plain manner i.e. without Tala in accordance with the sentiments, this drama still continues to enjoy great popularity. I am not certain whether its appeal would have remained the same had it been written in ordinary dialogue. They have been sung by breaking up those fixed rhythms and in a conversational way. On the stage, this music-drama of Gurudev Rabindranath should be sung in this way.

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Now I will give translations of some portions from two of Gurudev's later dance-dramas, "Syama" and "Chandalika". The dance-drama of "Syama" is a tragedy of love. Syama, the court-dancer, is fascinated by Bajrasena, a foreigner, who is unfairly arrested and condemned to death. To possess Bajrasena, Syama saves his life by sacrificing the life of Uttiya, a young admirer of Syama. Bajrasena gratefully accepts Syama, but when he comes to know that Syama has succeeded in getting his release at the cost of the life of Uttiya he leaves Syama in bitter shame and hatred. The portion to be sung now is the dialogue between Bajrasena and Syama regarding the former's release.

Bajrasena — Your task was not easy, tell me how you set me free.

I pledge my life to give what I owe, I promise, my love, do let me know.

Syama — What I did for you was difficult but it's even more difficult for me to tell you. A boy, in his teens, Uttiya by name, was spurned by me; maddened with love, and upon my plea, he pleaded guilty. Now there he lies dead to my shame.

Bajrasena — You'll have to cry, O sinner, Peace will elude you forever, thunder will crush your nest of sin.

Syama — Forgive me, forgive me.

My God curse me for my sin, and let his curse be more severe. But let me be blessed with your foregiveness, my Lord.

Bajrasena — You have bought my life with sin and cursed my life for ever more. O sinner, what a shame, for my very breath to be indebted to you.

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Syama — Pray, do not hold me guilty.

My guilt is guilt in the eyes of the Divine,
Let him loose all his fury.
but It'll be unbearable not to have your mercy.

Bajrasena — Would not you leave me yet ?

Syama — No, I'll not leave you
I've sinned for you,
Break my heart if you will,
I'll not leave you.

(Bajrasena strikes Syama and she falls. Exit Bajrasena)

Off Stage

Alas, what an ending,

The bowl of nectar is broken and given to death destruction. Such a precious love lost it's worth in ill repute and dishonour.

I will conclude my discussion with a part of Gurudev's last drama Nritya-Natya Chandalika. This is an untouchable maiden, Prakriti the daughter of a Chandal. On a summer afternoon, Prakriti was drawing water from her well when Ananda, a disciple of Buddha, came and asked for water to quench his thirst. Prakriti, refused to offer him water because she was an untouchable. Ananda contended that she was as much human as he himself and there was no distinction of high and low among men. This raised the spirit of Prakriti and she offered water to Ananda. As Ananda left her, Prakriti realised that she had entered a new phase of life and as a result of the charming treatment and the soothing words of Ananda she actually became infatuated with him. With the help of her mother she tried to cast her spell over Ananda by means of magical incantations and to bring Ananda to her cottage. But when Ananda arrived before her charmed by the incantation, Prakriti was filled with a sense of remorse. She realised that she was committing a sin by casting

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her own selfish desire. She at once caused the spell to break and then received the blessing of Ananda.

The dialogue between Prakriti and her mother after Ananda had gone.

Mother — You surprise me, girl, Do you think you are Uma ? Waiting for your Shiva ? Waiting and meditating in your tapasya.

Prakriti — Yes, I am waiting for him. I will meditate for him.

Mother — Why do you strive for him ? What is he ?

Prakriti — The one who called me out of the dungeon. Who has words for my speechless mouth, who has given me a new life. I want to repeat his name in my heart, continuously.

Mother — Why does he call you ? Does he call you at all ? Do you think he is your God ? He might be an evil spirit, trying to tempt you into a deeper dungeon. He is casting his evil spell on you. Why does he call you ?

Prakriti — His words are ringing in my heart. "Give me water. Please give me some water"

Mother — Good God, who said he wanted water from you ? Is he of your own caste ?

Prakriti — Yes, mother, He said that he is of my own. He is of the same caste as mine. It's not true. It's not true that I am a Chandalika. It's all wrong. Terribly wrong. If you call the dark clouds of the rains Chandala, do you call their water impure? You need the water of those dark clouds. He told me, "Don't shame yourself. You are human. You have human blood in your veins" Shame on you, mother'

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Why did you let me say that I am a Chandalika ? It's a sin to say that, There are Chandalikas born in the royal court.

I am not one of these. There are Chandals amongst Brahmins.

I am not one of these.

Mother — What are you trying to say ? I don't follow you. Who has given you such evil words ?

Prakriti — This is new life for me. I am reborn.

When the bell rang at high noon, the heat wes intense and I was near my well bathing the little calf. And the young monk came in front of me and asked for water. My body thrilled. Tell me, mother, why did he come to the well ? There are so many wells all over the village. Why did he choose my well ? Why did he do me this honour of offering water to a thirsty human being ?

Mother — Child, you forget yourself, this is an evil Spell that somebody is trying to draw around you.

Prakriti — No, he is not evil. He is a traveller. He is travelling into my heart. Alas, he will not come again. He will not be asking for water any more. My heart is now like a desert. It's dry and he is not asking for water any more.

(Singing sadly to herself)

Mother — Why don't you tell me, child, whom you want? Whom does your heart want ? Why don't you choose some one from your own caste ? Someone you know. Why do you reach for the moon ?

Prakriti — I want him who has given me the right to serve him. I am a flower from the dry dust.

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He took me in his lotus hands. Oh my lord, my lord, make a garland out of me. Put me round your neck. Don't foil me.

In this portion of the drama, Gurudev Tagore has included the following Raginis, namely Gurjari, Gurjari Tori, Bhairabi, Bhairab, Kedara, Bhupali, Behag, Khambaj, Kafi and a few folk tunes of Bengal.

After hearing the songs of this dance-drama it may appear at a casual examination that there is no difference between the songs of this drama and that of the earlier music-drama. But there is a certain difference.

The emphasis laid on tala is not so very great in the music-drama of Valmiki-Pratibha as in this dance-drama.

Gurudev deliberately made this difference.

It is a common experience of dancers that it is very inconvenient to dance without any fixed tala or rhythm. Therefore he composed the songs of Chitrangada, Chandalika and Syama mostly in fixed rhythms so that this difficulty would not arise while acting in dance.

Neverthless the songs were composed not in one single rhythm for a long time. The rhythm is continually altered in accordance with the change in the mood. The reason for this is that rhythms themselves have the power to express different Rasas or moods. Talas like Choutal Dhamar, Surfaktal, Trital, Dadra, etc. have different structures and beats and as such they create different moods. The expression of a Dhrupad song in Choutal is not the same as that of a song in Drut-Trital. Gurudev understood this fundamental quality of rhythm and deftly assimiliated various rhythms with the words and tunes of his dance-dramas. That is why he has introduced variations in rhythm along with the changes in the tone of the songs. The rhythm takes one form when the song reveals the feeling of anger and it is different when gravity is expressed, while with the emotion of happiness it is used differently. The use of the same rhythm for the expressions of the various feelings like anger, sorrow, happiness etc., is not to be found

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in his music of dance-dramas. In his dance-dramas the tunes also have followed the pattern of the rhythms with the result a single Ragini has been able to express diverse Ragas with the variation in Rhythm.

The way Gurudev has employed Raginis and Rhythms to correspond to the different feelings illustrate his great power as a composer. This was due to the fact that he had a very deep understanding of rhythms and of tunes of classical music as well as the folk music of Bengal.

From the stand point of compositions his music-dramas and dance-dramas are unique creations in the musical tradition of Bengal.

Although he has not wholly followed the Indian tradition in setting tunes to his music-dramas and dance-dramas he did not altogether forsake it.

Indian dance is mainly dependent upon songs. All the old dance-dramas are based on that. But in the revival of Indian dance during the last 40 years nobody has supported this excepting Gurudev. Nobody has composed a new dance-drama based on songs. The instrumental music has become their mainstay while it has no influence on the dance-composition of Gurudev.

Thus, by composing more than one play to be performed wholly with dance he stands as the only follower of the Indian ideal.

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The Place of Dance, Drama and Music in Gurudev Rabindranath's System of Comprehensive Education

Since it was total education which Gurudev aimed at providing in Visva-Bharati, music has been inseparably bound with it. The development of the faculty of music in this institution, therefore, calls for a proper understanding of the total picture of Visva-Bharati. Gurudev never gave any priority to any faculty in a fragmented and isolated manner. According to him training in religion, service to man, sports, self-reliance etc, are essential for human development, hence they are as much a part of education as other academic subjects. In his aims and objectives of education at Santiniketan what Gurudev repeatedly emphaised on is worth recalling. To quote three of his dictums :

(1) "In all developed countries the lower aim of education deals with material opportunities but the higher aim relates to fulfilment of human life".

(2) "How to live a complete life is according to me, the purpose of education".

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(3) "The Asram education is the education for living wholly and fully". He has explained these statements thus :

"The idea with which I undertook to found the Santiniketan Asram, did not aim at anything further beyond entertaining and elevating the common human mind. What is known as culture, is something variegated, it polishes and purifies the mind ; from the primitive dimness of an ore-like form, it ultimately helps the mind to attain its own value. This culture has numerous diversified branches. A healthy normal mind wants to absorb all those diverse inspirations.

"What I thought to provide in Santiniketan Asram was a wide field for cultivating all those branches of culture. The limited scope for this sort of cultivation offered in the text books, followed in the schools of our country, was not enough. I would accept as a part of this culture all the fine arts, as well as the training for rural welfare work." On the occasion of the foundation of Visva-Bharati he said "our education should be in full touch with our complete life, economical, intellectual, aesthetic, social and spiritual," The mutilation of life owing to this narrowness of culture must no longer be encouraged. In the proposed centre of our culture, music and art must have their prominent seats of honour, and not merely a tolerant nod of recognition. The different systems of music and different schools of art, which lie scattered in the different ages and provinces of India, and in the different strata of society, have to be brought there together and studied."

I shall now try to show how he proceeded to translate his ideas into reality.

Gurudev founded the Santiniketan School in 1901. Amidst the sylvan surroundings with just a few houses and cottages which his father had fashioned for lonely meditation, Gurudev started his work with a few students and teachers. Since the students were almost invariably from the middle-class families he was obliged to follow the system of entrance examination etc., which the Government of those days had introduced. But since he had little sympathy for that Government-sponsored system, based solely on examinations, he incorporated his own ideas and aims in his

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programme in a remarkable manner, which considering those times, could be regarded as heralding a new era in education.

The teachers and students of the early years of Santinketan recorded in their different accounts and memoirs that classes were held twice a day-in morning and afternoon and these classes combined a wide range of activities, pursuit of knowledge and enjoyment. A student's day started very early. After free hand exercise, arrangement of personal effects and beds, sweeping of the rooms, they used to have a bath at a nearby pond or a well. The older students were to draw water for younger ones. After the younger students had their breakfast, the teachers had theirs. After each meal, the students carried their own glasses and plates and cleaned the used utensils and brought them back. The students were to wash their clothes themselves. All duties relating to the refrectory such as marketing, preparing the menu, serving, cleaning the refrectory lay with the students. The students used to form their own union and more importantly, the students' court would try, punish and correct the offenders against the rules and code of behaviour which they themselves formulated in consultation with their superiors. The students were to engage themselves in various forms of physical exercises and games, like football and cricket on the one hand and judo, kabadi and stick-wielding on the othcr. At least a month's preparation preceded the annual athletic meet. Training in weaving, carpentry, bell-metal work, crushing of oil seeds and making of earthen images and dolls used to be imparted regularly. The building of huts and roads as well as filling of stagnating ponds were also part of the co-curricular activities. Every hostel had to be adorned with flower gardens made and tended by students. In fact, there used to be competitions over the latter. Decoration for the various festivals and observances at Santinketan depended entirely on the students. For annual celebrations of the institution towards the third week of December known popularly as Poush Utsava the students stopped attending classes for a few days in advance, in order to sweep and clean the entire area of the Asram. The large number of visitors who came for the celebrations, were looked after by the students themselves. Picnic and educational excursions were also organised by the students. When for the first time a printing press was set up at Santiniketan, it was seen that all students could regularly learn the diverse aspects of

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the press. A students' organisation under the name of "Abhayabrati" undertook to visit nearby villages regularly, in order to form night-schools and through them fight against illiteracy, by demonstrating to villagers educational pictures through magic lanterns and telling them stories of the "Ramayana," "Mahabharata," the "Puranas", giving them an elementary knowledge of history. They would also nurse the sick and distribute medicine among the poor. At the time of the movement against the partition of Bengal in 1905 the students and teachers used to move about in the villages singing Gurudev's patriotic songs, to rouse a sense of national consciousness. A kind of fete organised by students under the name of "Anandabazar" was introduced which included stalls of various kinds particularly of food and soft dtinks as well as entertainments. Carried on till to-day, "Andandabazar" resembles a mini-fare. Right from the construction of the stalls, to the making and selling of the wares everything used to be done by the students. The enthusiasm for this form of educative and enjoyable activity was also channelled to a worthy purpose of donating all their profits to the poor fund of the institution.

A news report of 1918 says : "The workshop is almost complete. In the workshop, work in tailoring, carpentry and weaving is going on. In the "Ghanis' (hand-operated oil mills) production of mustard oil has been started. Some of the students are learninig book-binding". The usual subjects like Bengali, English, History, Geography, Mathematics, Sanskrit, Physics, Chemistry, Physiology etc., were, of course, studied in the classes. But what needs to be emphasised is that the teachers saw to it that studies in thesc subjects were completed within the classrooms. No time in the evening or at night was generally reserved for studies in these subjects. Gurudev used to tell the teachers that studies in these subjects should be pursued in the classes in such a manner that the students did not have to study them at home. One of his pupils of those days writes : "The time specified for studies never oppressed us. We were never deprived of the joy born of the eagerness to study". Another informs : "In our time, the teachers used to complete the lessons inside classes, the practice of memorising lessons at home was unknown".

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Gurudev introduced a novel system of class promotion. A student belonged to different classes in different subjects in accordance with the proficiency he had attained in each. For instance, a student of seven or eight might start his study of English in class I but in view of his advanced knowledge in Bengali, Mathematics or Geography he could join his seniors in upper classes. In the early days of the institution the system of annual examination was not introduced. It was common to find a boy strong in English and Bengali studying in class VII but due to his weakness in Mathematics obliged to be in class VI. Gurudev also sought to limit the number of students in one class. A large number of students in a class, he felt, did not make for proper training and close relationship between that teachers and the taught.

During the first decade of the institution, Gurudev was intimately connected with his pupils. Sometimes he even stayed with them in the hostels. He instructed the teachers in teaching methods. A student says : "Gurudev was always alert that while going through lessons in a language we were not deprived of the beauties of literature. Under him we studied the poems of Walt Whitman, Keats, Wordsworth" and prose writings of Emerson and Lamb. He did not dismiss them as beyond our power of comprehension". The same student again writes : "Studies in English and Sanskrit did not follow any specific text. We used to learn orally from our teachers simple sentences in Sanskrit or English which we wrote down in our exercise books. Often the teachers would make extempore explanations of fragments of English poems into Bengali and then ask us to retranslate them into a verse form in English. This enabled us to learn and appreciate a number of well-known English Poems at a very early age". Another student speaks of the method adopted by a gifted teacher. "He used to read out an English short story to us and test whether we could appreciate it. The portions which baffled us, were explained by him and afterwards he would ask us to write it out either in English or in the Bengali class".

A teacher used to teach science in the manner of story-telling. A three-inch telescope was his constant companion and at night he observed the sky through it and called the students to share his knowledge and delight.

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Among the educational activities outside classes Gurudev introduced regular feature of Literary Meetings, debates and publication of hand written journals. The entire responsibility of organising these activities was placed on the students who shouldered it with great enthusiasm. They themselves decorated the meetings, made the agenda, selected and invited the person to preside over the meetings. Gurudev himself was often prevailed upon by the young students to take the chair. The students themselves constituted the writers and speakers, the listeners and also the critics. The hand-written journals included writings and paintings of the students and along with theirs, Gurudev and the other teachers contributed too, to increase the students' zeal and encourage their efforts.

Gurudev was well aware that one of the vital deficiencies of the existing schools of the country related to their failure to provide an introduction to the wisdom and thoughts of ancient India. He, therefore, devised a way through which the young minds unable to understand them could develop the mental attitude to accept them without concious effort. In the morning and evening every day the students used to congregate for silent, meditation for some time and then chant slokas from the Vedas the meaning of which were explained to them either by Gurudev himself or by some other teacher. On Wednesdays — the weekly holiday in Santiniketan — and other special occasions Gurudev used to conduct a noncommunal divine service or prayer meeting for students and teachers. In these prayer meetings the students listened to the mantras, their interpretations and moral teachings suitable to the occasions which related either to birth celebrations of great men or events of spiritual significance or observance in memory of a departed soul. An indispensable part of these services was formed by Gurudev's songs of spiritual content sung by the student and teachers. But it must be admitted that the meaning of the songs or the significance of the mantras or their interpretations could not be wholly intelligible to the young students. The effect of all that was, however, to create respect for the moral wisdom of ancient India which was necessary for the total development of the students' mind and morality. This was a kind of vital training which was never attempted in any Government sponsored institution.

What, however, was most important in the entire educational system in Santiniketan was its accent on enjoyment and in the

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cultivation of the diverse means of enjoying life Gurudev laid special stress on music. He did not initially arrange for any separate class for music. The time after the evening prayer kept reserved came to be specified for entertainment. About this hour of entertainment a teacher of those days wrote : "In the evenings Gurvdev used to spend the hours with the teachers and pupils in story-reading or various kinds of games....We were surprised to note the novelty with which he used to enterain us. What is known today as "Sense-training" was first introduced by Gurudev himself among the students of our institution.... In the Library Hall students often organised charades and other dramatic puzzle-games. It was in these evening gatherings that Gurudev's new songs used to be sung. Nobody was left out". Rathindranath Tagore wrote : "After prayers we always gathered at the Library Verandah. Father used to be present and entertain the boys either by songs or stories or games". Another teacher said : "Gurudev started the hour of entertainment for the students after evening prayer. In the evening the poet would come there and sing with the boys standing by his side". According to a student of those days "We did not have any duty to perform in the evening. At that time we had many means of entertainment — charades, debates, songs, story-tellings, sense training, star observations etc. We eagerly looked forward to these evening gatherings". An old student too provides the same evidence : "In those days there was no practice of studies in the evenings which was meant for entertainment. Gurudev and other teachers told stories, songs used to be taught by Dinendranath and Ajit Chakravarty. Often Gurudev himself would organise a sort of musicial soiree or read stories with all those present"—Another student writes : "His influence was pervading. Particularly when he used to read from his writings during the entertainment hour in the evening, all barriers of formality would easily crumble down. During the drama period, he would not simply guide the boys how to act, but took pains to show how his songs should be performed". Thus the entertainment hour played a very significant role in supplementing the general education at Santinketan from its very inception.

Music and dramas filled the air at Santiniketan. They lent to its education a new aroma, a unique dimension. A teacher of those days writes, "The memory of the New Year's festivities that took

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place two or three years in succession since the foundation of the school, still lingers. I still recall the scene".

"None of us would sleep at night preceding the New Year. Then at 4 A.M. when darkness would start lifting its curtain and the prayer room would be charged with a morning raga performed by "Sri Radhika Goswami" we all would begin to assemble".

"I also remember afresh when once "Midsummer Nights Dream" was staged, Satishbabu directed it, and the venue for the rehearsal was the open air Khoal that overlooked the western side of Uttarayana".

"I vividly recollect an occasion of much later date when Gurudev was staying with some students, who had been showing signs of indiscipline, on the first floor in the library building. It seems, only to quieten them and win them over that he took to writing a drama, later known as "Saradotsaba". As evening fell, students would show up, and the Poet would train them to sing his latest compositions. "Thus in the long run the poet won the battle, and henceforth dramas served to be a very effective experiment in soothing frayed nerves and dispelling the feelings of grievance if there were any".

The play "Bisarjan" was staged in 1902. Remembering the occassion Shri Rathindranath Tagore writes :—

"There were very few students then, so the three of us Santosh Mujumder, Nayan Chatterjee and myself — had to take some of the leading parts. But as the rehearsals progressed the teachers got alarmed and complained to the father that if the project was not dropped at once there was no chance of our passing the Entrance Examination which was drawing near. But our joy knew no bounds when Father turned a deaf ear to their importunities and rehearsals continued merrily as before. I may mention here that such opposition from teachers recurred ever since with monotonous regularity, only to be met with inevitable fate it deserved from Father."

"When "Saradotsab" was produced (1908) the character of the Asram had changed considerably...There were about a hundred

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students and the staff too had increased proportionately. So there were lots of people to choose from and the cast was of a much higher standard. Father himself selected the actors after putting them through hard tests. In those days he preferred to hold the rehearsals in an open place and did not mind the whole Asram looking on and listening. As a result, the rehearsals of plays and music were of great educative value to the whole community and not to the participants only. I am sure this was the most effective method by which Father was able to infuse the whole Asram with the spirit of art and music. There were no regular classes for teaching of music, and yet almost every body could sing; music was in the air as has ever been since".

"Father felt greatly encouraged by the success of "Saradotsab", which was followed by "Prayaschitta", "Raja" and "Achalayatan" were written and staged within a short time.

An old student writes; "Gurudev's "Mukut", "Hasyakautuk", "Byangyakautuk" used to be very popular, and they all participated in "Saradotsava, "Bisarjan", "Malini", "Raja" and "Achalayatan". During that period male students and teachers themselves used to appear in the female roles. Gurudev himself often took part in drama and directed them".

It is from Mr. Pearson we know that "At the end of each term arrangements are made for staging one of the poet's plays. The teachers and boys take the different parts, and the play is staged in Santiniketan, vistors coming from Calcutta to see it, specially if the poet is himself taking part. The poet coaches the actors himself, first reading the play aloud, and then reading it over with those who are to take part. During the days when the play is being rehearsed there are not many classes held, for the boys of the whole school are always present at the rehearsals. The final day is a busy one, for the stage has to be prepared and there must be a dress rehearsal. To this the boys are not admitted, as it would take away the freshness of the play if they were able to see a too nearly perfect presentation of it beforehand. But when it begins there is great enthusiasm amongst visitors and boys alike, as the songs and dance reveal the spirit of the play to the delighted audience. In this way the ideas of the poet are assimilated by the boys, without their

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having to make any conscious effort. In fact they are being educated into his thought through the sub-conscious mind, and this is one of the root principles of Rabindranath Tagore's method of education. English plays are also sometimes given, as well as Sanskrit, and it is remarkable to see what histrionic powers the Bengali boy has, even when he has to act in a foreign tongue. When the play is in Bengali then they are in their element, and they seem to have such aptitude for acting that the smaller boys often get up plays of their own without any assistance from the masters. At the beginning of 1916 there was a performance of the poet's new play "A Spring Festival" in Calcutta, and a number of the younger boys, aged from eight to ten, took part in the chorus. They did not have to do any acting, but merely sang the songs and took part in the dances, so that they were practically in the position of spectators on the stage. After the play was over, these small boys surprised us by giving one evening a performance of the whole play, each boy taking one of the characters with such perfect mimicry of those who had taken the parts in Calcutta that the performance was irresistible. Every shade of humour and seriousness was reproduced to perfection by these pigmy actors".

During his tour in America in 1916, the Poet dwelt on the students participation in the Asram's drama and said "those who have witnessed these boys playing their part in dramatic performances have been struck by their wonderful powers as actors. It is because they were never directly trained in the histrionic art. They instinctively enter into the spirit of the plays in which they take part, though these plays are no more school boy's dramas. They require subtle understanding and sympathy. With all the anxiety and hypercritical sensitiveness of an author about the performance of his own play, I have never been disappointed in my boys, and I have rarely allowed teachers to interfere with the boy's own representation of the characters. Very often they themselves write plays and improvise them and we are invited to their performance."

From the very beginning, music was inextricably associated with the life of the school. Shri Dinendranath Tagore, including the poet himself, helped these students pick up varieties of songs, complicated as well easier ones. Mr. Pearson leaves for us a colourful

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description that shows how the students used songs as a source of joy in their day-to day life. Writes Mr. Pearson.

"During the day I came to know some of the teachers and listened to some of the boys singing, for the poet's songs occupy a large part of school life".

He continues, "In the evening, as it was a moonlight night, we went out, boys and teachers as well, to a wood about a mile away from school. We sat in a circle under the trees and the boys sang"

"Occasionally excursions will be planned, either for the day for the whole school, or for several days to some place of historical interest, in which case only a few selected boys will go accompanied by two or three of the teachers. In the former case we go to some place within easy reach of the asram, and taklng our food with us cook it by the side of a river or under the trees in a wood. The whole day is spent in the open air, and singing and games form the chief part of the programme.

"The boys are awakened before sunrise by the singing of one of the poet's songs by a band of singers.

"The sound of the boys voices, as they came back from their evening meal to their dormitories, had ceased, when in the stillness there arose the sound of singing. It was a group of boys who, every evening before they retire to bed, sing one of the poet's songs. Gradually they approached the house where we were sitting, and as they turned away, the sound receded, getting fainter and fainter until it died out altogether".

Gurudev himself admitted "Songs are composed, not specially made to order for juvenlie minds. They are songs that a poet writes for his own pleasure. In fact, most of the "Gitanjali" songs were written here. These, when fresh in their first bloom, are sung to the boys, and they came in crowds to learn them. They sing them in their leisure hours, sitting in groups, under the open sky on moonlit nights, in the shadows of the impending rain in July"

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Mr. C.F. Andrews had come to Santiniketan in 1913, during the rainy season. According to his version "Each morning, we began very early. The Choir (Vaitalik) went round sometimes even before 4-30 A.M." With Dinu Babu's (Dinendranath's) glorious voice and perfect memory of the poet's songs, the musical and dramatic sides were very well developed. In the evenings, there were abundant opportunities for drama, often made up on the spur of the moment ; and the literary clubs were almost as numerous as the school classes. The youngest boys had their own Sahitya-Sabha."

"When "Mohan-Bagan" came over, we had a holiday for the whole day. In the evening, after the match was over, we would have songs and a dramatic performance.

"On every Purnima if the weather was fine, we used to go out to some favourite spot in the country and take our evening meal there. Afterwards, we would spend the rest of the evening in the moonlight with all its entrancing beauty while we listened to songs and music.

"In the early afternoon, the boys would be busy with their rehearsing of the play they were going to perform and the teachers took their parts along with the boys".

At Santiniketan it was quite customary for the students to sing on all occassions be it the festive days of the New Year, "Purnima Utsava" or the reception of dignitaries and eminent persons.

There is no evidence to prove that during the first decade of the school classical Hindustani Music was taught regularly and systematically. But there are ample reasons to believe that Gurudev cherished such an idea.

In 1911, the "Tattvabodhini Patrika" informs us "Gurudev has left Santiniketan for England after introducing the "Baitalik" Choir. It now sings twice a day, once in the early morning and the next at night"

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Even during his stay abroad he was anxious to know if the students were taking lessons seriously. Allaying his fear Mr. Ajit Chakravarty wrote back to the poet'. "The "Baitalik" Choir is functioning properly, and the students are taking avid interest in music." Gurudev replied, "I am afraid, the cultivation of music in our school has perhaps dwindled. But it won't be the right thing. You all should work in earnest to keep the urge among students ever growing ; for it is one of the principal ingredients of our asram life. It is an invaluable embellishment of our lives. Not that all of them should be immaculate artists." Gurudev continued, "But the positive gain would be that their ambit of joy would be wider. It is good if the school can afford to appoint a teacher for music now".

Mr. Chakravarty replied. "I am giving lessons regularly, but then, you will admit I have my limitations. It would have been better for the school to have a teacher. But unforunately for pecuniary reasons it is not possible for the present". By requesting to appoint a new teacher the poet did not mean to say a "Rabindra-Sangeet" teacher should be appointed. All he wished was a teacher for classical Hindustani Music.

Having returned from England Gurudev appointed two Punjabi teachers for this purpose. They were the first teachers of Hindustani music at Santiniketan. But their stay was short and they did not return after the summer vacation. Shortly after this Bhimrao Shastri, a Maharashtrian singer was appointed who taught Sanskrit as well.

So far there was scope for training students in "Rabindra Sangeet" alone although he always felt the necessity for training in Hindustani Classicai music also. Gurudev himself explained why at this belated stage he proposed to introduce classical music in his institution.

"When I first started my school my boys had no evident love for music. The consequence is that at the beginning I did not employ music teacher and did not force the boys to take music lessons. I merely created opportunities when those of us who had the gift could exercise their musical culture. It had the effect of

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unconsciously training the ears of the boys. And when gradually most of them showed a strong inclination and love for music I saw that they would be willing to subject themselves to formal teaching, and it was then that that I secured a music teacher".

Bhimrao Shastri while engaged in teaching during the regular sessions and had published a collection of Hindi songs of various styles, embodying musical notes for vocal practice for the convenience of the learners. His mastery over "Drupad", "Kheyal" and "Tappa" was as profound as his efficiency in "Tabla" and "Pakhawaj". The students would receive musical lessons from him with the accompaniment of the "Tanpura'. His style of teaching was unconventional. Though he used to teach Hindi songs based upon various Ragas and Raginis he would avoid the application of various musical forms like the "Alap", Tan", "Vistar" etc. obviously with the understanding, that students will never take up music as a profession.

To him, the volume of pleasure they (students) derived from the Bengali songs was sufficient and if the same could be obtained from these Hindustani songs he felt his trouble would be worth-while. His efforts were thereforc directed at having a profound understanding of the identity of the Hindustani music based upon various Ragas and Raginis as well as of the fundamental theme of the same by the students. In his class, he would teach only those students who showed a musical faculty, though the less talented ones would not be deprived of the lessons. That Bhimrao Shastri's success through such a process was demonstrated by the fact that the students derived pleasure through practice of Hindustan Music. Mr. Shastri was a Maharastrian and an erudite scholar in Sanskrit and he would occasionally induce the students and professors to stage Sanskrit plays in the classical style with prologues and so on.

In 1918 when the school at Santiniketan reached, as it were, its youth, Gurudev thought of releasing it from its confines of childhood and relate it to the entire world. This meant the founding of a modern university based on Indian ideals and in harmony with the school. The university was not to be in the prevalent mould

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which "like a parasite would hang from the branches of a foreign tree". It had to keep before it the highest mission of attainment of the fullness of life and freely use all opportunities of novel and diverse creative activities, unify the human community through exchange of knowledge and apply if possible subjects of studies in the living realities of the villages around the institution. As to how his mind worked upon the above mentioned idea will be understood from his own statements made at that time. He said "That Education which creates the ability to acquire truths from the soil of the country and to express that truth all on one's own is true education for our country. The education of repetition is not the education of the mind, it can be provided by a machine".

"The field of education lies there where the process of creativity through learning goes on. The primary task of a university is to produce learning. Its secondary task is the disbursement of learning". "In every country education is linked with the total flow of life in the country". "If there is to be a real school in India, it will, right from the beginning, apply its studies in economics, agriculture, hygiene and all applied sciences to the villages around which it is situated and thereby earn a central position in the current of life in the country". "I have suggested that such an university be named Visva-Bharati". Gurudev also announced that the new University will have arrangements for studying Pali, Sanskrit, and English language and literature and Phonetics, Buddhist Philosophy and painting ; "Shri Bhimrao Shastri and Shri Dinendranath Tagore' are ready to teach music. These arrangements are being made for those who on the campletion of usual education, wish to become experts in Buddhist and Sanskrit Shastras, painting and music".

In an article entitled "Music teaching in the Asram" which was published a little later, it was stated "Just as all the students of the Asram have to study English, Bengali, Geography, History, etc. so also each of them has to undergo training in music. Those boys who have the ability to sing or are musically-disposed, have to study music daily at an appointed hour.

Shri Bhimrao Shastri and Shri Dinendranath Tagore are imparting teaching in vocal and instrumental music. This has led

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to a number of ordinary students developing into good singers. But till today no student has come to us whose sole aim is to study music although we have here arrangements for training such students. Shri Bhimrao Shastri is ready to teach Hindustani music in the traditional manner while Sri Dinendranath Tagore can teach all the old and new songs of Acharya Rabindranath. Training in reading and singing to notations is also provided. It is known to all how popular Acharya Rabindranath's songs have become these days. There are many cultured families which are anxious to provide teachers for training their children in music but they are baffled because of the lack of music teachers of good education and character. We know of a few commercially-disposed singers of Calcutta who are earning quite a lot by teaching music in upper-class families. The amount they earn is far greater than what is earned after having passed a few examinations. But these music teachers cannot satisfy the social necessity which more than ever underlines the want of music teachers of education and character. If students come to the Asram to learn music only, they can be trained into skilled exponents of all types of Rabindranath's songs and Hindustani music in course of two years or even less."

After the inaugural function in 1919, with Gurudev in the chair, Visva-Bharati set out on its journey. Gurudev in his inaugural speech on that day said—

"The force that dictates and influences on our country comes from outside. So mighty is this force that we can't get over it and think on our own.

"When the desire to set up a school at this Asram came into my mind, I thought I would find for me a fenced shed here. During my stay here I thought I would give my mind the dimension of the sky free from all vices. The Asram had then no resemblance to any school. But in modern days it is not possible to travel in this tidal wave. Any situation which has no similarity with those that existed in other parts of the land can't stay. So the nature and the set up has undergone a big change.

"I dreamt that the teaching of the school would be such that the slavery of the mind of students should be removed. But the

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mode of education tied our society so tightly that it was very hard to get out of it. Moreover I lacked courage. My strength and experience were also very little. I had to develop the school upto the Matriculation standard. Within this limitation I tried to give it an independent character of its own."

One of Gurudev's articles entitled "Kalavidya" was published in the journal "Santinketan" in 1918. Many members of Santiniketan and Visva-Bharati could not support inclusion of music and art in the list of subjects for study. They were ready to accept music and art as items of entertainment, but were not ready to give these two items the honour of the subjects like literature, grammar, philosophy, language and history which were deemed suitable for higher studies at University level. Gurudev's articles were meant to remove these hesitations., In the articles Gurudev said that man expressed his personality through the qualities of mind which might be developed with the help of art. In all the countries, civilised or uncivilised, people had sympathy for art.

Gurudev also said, "In our country learned people are afraid of indulging in merry making. Enjoyment according to them, disturbs vital activities of man. If "Visva-Bharati" is formed, teaching of Indian music and art must be its principal treasures. This should be our pledge". With this pledge in mind, Gurudev made steady strides in pushing "Visva-Bharati" to its desired goal. In the annual report of "Visva-Bharati" for the year 1919 the urgency of taking up music was stressed.

In the half-yearly report of the Visva-Bharati from 18th Ashar to 7th. Pous in the year 1326 B.S. the following subjects were listed to have been taught.

1) Sanskrit Part I — Literature and grammar
   Part II — Logic and Philosophy
2) Pali Part I — Literature and Grammar
   Part II — Philosophy and Psychology.
3) English literature
4) Cylonese language
5) Art
6) Music

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In the second annual report of Visva-Bharati, subjects taught were detailed as follows:—

"There were three streams— (1) Literature (2) Art, (3) Music.

"The literature stream included Sanskrit, Poetry, Grammar, Pali Literature, Philosophy, Psychology, English literature, French language, German Language, and Bengali literature. The Art stream included painting and imagination. The music stream included vocal and instrumental music."

In 1918 Gurudev went to "Pithapuram" in Andhra Pradesh following an invitation from the Maharaja of Pithapuram. Gurudev was given a berth at the royal guest house and was entertained by South India's noted Veena player, Sangameswar Shastri. Shastri came to Gurudev every evening and played on his Veena till late in the night. Gurudev was moved and requested the Maharaja to send Shastri to Santiniketan. Accordingly Shastri was sent to Santinketan in 1919 before winter.

Gurudev also went to Agartala in 1919 as the guest of the Maharaja of Tripura. Gurudev was impressed by the dance of the "Manipuri" Boys at Silchar and planned to introduce this dance among the students of Santiniketan. He urged the Maharaja of Tripura to help him with a dance teacher. The Maharaja was happy to send to Santiniketan his Darbar's famous dancer Buddhimanta Singh in 1920.

Though Gurudev intended to introduce teaching of dancing, he could not announce it in public. He only explained that this dance was a type of exercise suitable for the Asram boys. Dance would not find a place in the Visva-Bharatis curriculum for many years due to opposition of many of the teachers. Before leaving for Europe in the next summer he asked the dance teacher not to continue after summer vacation. Gurudev had great doubts whether the training in "Manipuri" dance would go on during his absence.

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The second revised curriculum of the Visva-Bharati was published about a month after the publication of the first one. The second curriculum was as follows :-

The Visva Bharati

Yatra Visva Bhavatyekanidam

1) The Visva Bharti is for higher studies.

2) The system of examinations will have no place whatsoever in the Visva Bharati, nor is there any conferring of degrees. Students will be encouraged to follow a definite course of study, but there will be no compulsion to adopt it rigidly."

Subjects

3) At present there are four departments of studies here, viz :

I. Language and Literature

II. Philosophy

III. Arts

IV. Music.

Music

20) The course of music, too, is of six years, three years being for general efficiency and three years for higher proficiency.

21) Lessons are given in classical Indian music as well as in Rabindranath's songs. For comparative study, western music is also taught in a general manner

22) Lessons in instrumental music are given also.

According to this curriculum teaching of music went on just as teaching of other subjects.

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On the 5th August in 1920 Gurudev wrote a letter from Europe to a music student expressing his complete reliance on the latter for the developement of Music teaching, which, Gurudev said, was one of the vital parts of Visva-Bharati education.

In view of the country's economic crisis and plight of the middle class people, increasing pressure was coming on Gurudev to tie Visva-Bharati up with the rules and regulations prevailing in other Universities of the country. Gurudev was assured by many that if the Visva-Bharati was brought under such rules and regulations, it would be very easy to get the sympathy of the Government and the people. He was also told that if there was no system of conferring degrees or certificates in the Visva-Bharati there would soon be want of students here. Against his will Gurudev had to accept his collegues suggestion But the curriculum which he had introduced since Visva-Bharati's inception was retained.

According to the new mode of teaching, Santiniketan's educational institution was divided into three parts :—

1) Patha-bhavan

2) Siksha-bhavan

3) Vidya-bhavan

Among these the first can be regarded as the School, the second as college and the third as something akin to a research department. Special place was reserved for handicrafts, painting and music. Besides, through the Department of Rural Reconstruction in general, the students could have the opportunity to study rural life. The medium of instructiom was Bengali but in case it created any inconvience other languages were also used.

On the completion of studies in every Vibhaga students received certificates which carry the results of examinations and the remarks of teachers.

Patha-Bhavan

Patha Bhavan has two sections. The one for the small age group is Adya Vibhaga and the other for comparatively bigger age

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group is Madhya Vibhaga. Successful students after completing the courses in each Vibhaga, receive certificates.

(A) Adya Vibhaga :— For boys and girls from the age group of 6 to 14. The age for admission into this Vibhaga is generally from 6-9 years. There is no such rule for girls.

The syllabus for Adya Vibhaga.

(a) Subject of studies (Not to be examined)—Nature studies, Primary science, Painting, Music, Handicrafts.

(b) Subject of studies (To be examined)—Sanskrit, Bengali, English, Mathematics, History, Geography.

(c) Optional subjects—Hindi, Gujarati, Urdu, Persian, French, Teaching of other languages can also be arranged.

Entrance Examination

"Those students who wish to appear in entrance examinations of Calcutta University or other university are given special coaching for two years after it. In accordance with the special permission granted by Calcutta University, the students do not have to sit for the test examination conducted by the Inspector of Schools.

Madhya Vibhaga

"Those students who are desirous of prosecutting further studies in this institution after having received the certificates of Adya Vibhaga, have three avenues open before them. Training for earning, for literary pursuits, for appearing in some examination of some university.

The Madhya Vibhaga has two aims, first to train up those who would take to literary pursuits or research work. Secondly, to provide development in an atmosphere of learning to those who would earn their livlihood through commerce or agriculture. The students undergoing the "education for earning" would have to join one of the following sections, Kala Bhavan (here training in painting and handicraft is imparted),, or Sriniketan (Section for

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rural reconstruction) where there is one dairy, different work-shops, Bratibalak (scout) training facilities, medical unit for village work etc.

"The object of Sriniketan is not only to produce students skilled in farming or handicrafts, it also aims at building up experts in the scientific methods of rural reconstruction."

In 1925 Visva-Bharti saw another change. The authorities announced, "Just as the school students of Visva-Bharati can sit for the Calcutta University Matriculation examinations as private candidates, so also the students of the "Uttara Vibhaga" of Visva-Bharati can take Calcutta University's I.A. and B.A. examination from 1926".

"Recently the C.U. authorities have given the permission far that. True, the students of Visva-Bharti will, therefore, be obliged to study the C.U. courses but the Visva-Bharati authorities will see to it that they can learn some other subjects outside the C.U. courses. The extensive arrangements made for learning in the Visva-Bharati, have not been able, due to varios reasons, to draw many students to make use of the opportunities offered. If the above openings attract grown up students, they may to some extent fulfil the possibilities of these arrangements."

The facts arranged above chronologically make it clear that since 1920, Gurudev, despite his best efforts could not fully realise his educational aims at Visva-Bharati on account of the hostile social climate. Yet as in his school, he succeeded in creating in his university too an atmosphere of living and comprehensive education and retained a distinctive character of its own. No further change was made during his life time and this assimilative aspect of the system still continues in a good measure.

Gurudev Rabindranath was very eager to make Visva-Bharati a meeting ground of Indian and foreign music. This is indicated by his statement at the inauguration of Visva-Bharati: "This Institution, according to the plan I have in mind, invites students from the West and Far East to study tne different systems of Indian Philosophy, literature, art and music in their proper environment,

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encouraging them to carry on research work in collaboration with the scholars already engaged in the task".

In a letter he expressed this wish more distinctly. "We have a plan to engage a European musician." But the wish could not be fulfilled on account of lack of funds. Yet European musicians and musicologists like Mr. Garmanush, Mr. Allain Danielou did come to Visva-Bharati. Some, of course, stayed for only a few months. All, however, taught the students European music and developed a taste for Indian classical music and Gurudev's songs and some also went for collection of folk songs.

Dr. and Mrs. Bake stayed in Santiniketan for 9 years. They hailed from Holland. The husband used to sing and the wife accompained him on the piano. Dr. Bake knew Sanskrit and had translated and edited a manuscript of "Sangita Darpana". He learnt Gurdev's songs from Dinendranath and wrote them down in staff notation. After returning home he published in French and English a book containing 26 songs of Gurudev with notation. He had collected a great many Indian folk songs of various types. His dissertations with musical demonstrations were appreciatively listened to by the inmates of Santiniketan.

After Visva-Bharati was founded, many seasonal festivals which were introduced for the school, came to be celeberated regularly through which the students of "Uttara-Vibhaga" practised the art of song, recitation, dance and drama.

The students Union which was known as the "Visva-Bharati Sammelani" used to hold literary meetings and seminars in which the teachers also participated. Their own publications included stories, poems, essays and paintings. Gurudev often read out to these students his own compositions, poems, stories, songs and plays. The members of the staff took part in the extension lectures on various topics. Musical soirees were organised on very Tuesday. Performances of Gurudev's plays or English or Sanskrit dramas were frequently given. The girl students used to stage tableaux. Young teachers often composed and put up musical dramas based on the "Jatra" tradition of Bengal. The training in social service was carried on by Sriniketan.

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From 1921 "Barshamangal" (Festival of rains) came to be celebrated officially. In 1928 the tree plantation (Vriksharopana) festival and the ploughing (Halakarshana) festival became linked with the former. Gurudev also wrote a large number of plays, operas and dance dramas or rewrote some old ones abounding in songs. all these are also meant for cultivation of arts of dance, drama and music.

Also, the songs became an integral part of the daily morning congregations before classes started as also of the prayer meetings held every Wednesday morning or the various other observances of spiritual significance. All these led to the constant cultivation of music, dance and drama. Gurudev gave the greatest importance not to classroom teaching but to learning by assimilation through participation in a programme in a congenial atmosphare. That is why the festivals and observances helped to spread dance and music among students so widely.

In order to open the faculty of dancing be brought the exponents of "Manipuri" dance Shri Buddhimanta Singh in 1920 and Naba Kumar Singh in 1925. Two other dancers came from Imphal in 1929. "Sm. Kalyani Amma" came in 1934 from Kerala, who was an expert in "Mohini Attam". But none of them stayed for long, on account of which the smooth training in classical dances was repeatedly hampered though it was never stopped completely. The dance was carried on in various ways. But from 1935 Gurudev introduced regular study of dances of Manipur and Kerala. The training in music and dances which was given since the days of the Santiniketan school did not follow any syllabus fixed by ordinances and examininations ; it was based on the needs of various functions and festivals.

In 1934-35 some students joined Visva-Bharati solely for the study of music and dance, when a syllabus had to be drawn up which was finalised in 1936. It was as follows :

Syllabus and Course

The Sangit Bhavan aims at providing instruction in all the three branches of Indian Music, i.e., Gita (Vocal music), Vadya (instrumental music) and Nritya (Dancing).

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1. Vocal Music :

(a) Classical Hindustani Music. The course of study covers a period of three years. The following Ragas are taught :—

1st year. Alahia, Bibhas, Bhupali, Khambaj, Kalyan, Iman, Jhinjhit, Sindhu, Kedar,

2nd Year. Kafi, Bahar, Tilak, Kamod, Desh, Kalangra, Nishashag, Bhairabi, Bageswari, Pilu, Kedar.

3rd Year. Chayanat, Durga, Purabi, Bhairab, Ashavari, Mallar, Belabali, Jay-jayanti, Malkosh, Darbari, Kanada, Puria.

Students are taught one Sargram, one Lakshan Gita and two Kheyals with alap and tans in each Raga, Dhrupad and Dhamar (simple forms only) and Thumri (in a few ragas) are included.

Sight singing, identification and correct intonation of notes are especially attended to.

(b) Bengali Music—Specially Tagore's songs. Course is for three years. Voice training is carried on side by side with the teaching of new songs.

1st Year.

1st term. There is no selection in admitting pupils to this class. At the end of the term those who are found to be absolutely unmusical are weeded out and not allowed to go on with the class in the 2nd term. More attention is given in this term to individual training. While practising together individuals are frequently asked to perform separately.

After a fairly good number of songs are learnt voice training follows along with the practice of reading notations at sight.

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2nd Year

1st term. Sight reading of notations with the help of the blackboard. More songs.

2nd term. Lessons in the character of some of the Ragas. Lessons in elementary "tala". More songs.

3rd Year.

1st term. Practice in noting down simple music. More songs.

2nd term. Lessons in the characteristics of Bengali folk music, etc., More songs.

2. Instrumental Music.

The course is for three years. There is provision for the teaching of Sitar, Israj and Tabla.

1st Year. Elementary lessons on movement of fingers and alankars, and easy Gats of the following with simple Tans : Iman, Bilawal, Bhupali. Khambaj, Jhinjhoti, Chayanat, Bibhas.

2nd Year. Revision of the work done in the first year and the following additional Ragas with Tans and Toras:

Kedar, Hamir, Behag, Desh, Pilu, Kafi, Bhimpalasri, Sarang, Bhairabi, Ashavari.

3rd Year. Detailed and Scientific study of the Ragas with Tans and Toras of advanced style:

Purabi, Bhairab, Ramkeli, Multani. Sohini, Puria, Gouri, Kanada, Adana, Malkosh, Jaijayanti, Kalangra, Vasant, Bageshrt, Jaunpuri.

3. Indian Dancing.

The course is for four years.

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1st year.	Elementary classes in Manipuri Dancing. Elementary classes in South Indian Dancing.
2nd year.	Manipuri Tala dances. South Indian Tala dances. Training in "bol" and symbolic Mudra.
3rd year.	South Indian Kathakali and Celyonese dances. Rendering of Bengali songs to dances. Study of poses from old paintings and frescoes.
4th year.	Mimicry and expression. composition. Dramatic interpretation.

Special advanced classes were carried on for those who finished the four years' regular course or were trained for some dramatic performance."

Actually it was the students of departments other than Sangit Bhavan who partipated in a greater degree in dance, drama and music, for these have been the part of festivals and programmes in Santiniktan. Behind this, there has been other reason as well. Athough to develop professional expertise, the Sangit Bhavan was established, its another purpose was to diffuse these arts among all as a part of the comprehensive education of Visva-Bharati. A Visva-Bharati report distinctly states that: "This department contributes largely to the enrichment of the general cultural life of tbe Asram. The festivities and ceremonies...form an integral part of the education of the institution".

The aims and objects of Sangit Bhavan were clearly underlined in its prospectus which says:

"One of the many valuable privileges and opportunities available to students of Visva-Bharati is that a student by joining any one of the educational departments is allowed the benefit of attending classes or courses in any other department or activity, without having to pay any extra fees...it being one of the main principles of our educational practice to see

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that the pupil does not neglect any of the major human faculties, nor over-develops one at the expense of any other. Our efforts are of course handicapped by the fact that most of our students join at an age when their character and mental habits are more or less already formed; nevertheless, the influences that work on their minds here are not entirely without their effect."

The question of changing and expanding the syllabus arose when in 1941 the number of students in Sangit Bhavan increased to about 50. Gurudev also felt the need for a change and called me for discussion. In course of the discussion it was decided that if the selection of the Bengali songs is made keeping the Hindustani Ragas in view, then the trainees would be able to understand profoundly through the medium of Bengali songs the forms of the Hindustani Ragas. Gurudev asked me to make a list of songs in accordance with this principle for each year of the Bengali music classes. He was to have seen this list but he passed away before the list could be completed. Although he could not see the list himself, it was made on the basis of Ragas taught in corresponding years of the Hindustani music classes. This was done beeause in those days a trainee could and did learn Hindustani and Bengali music at the same time. In fact, the ability of the trainee permitting, there was no bar in this learning both Bengali and Hindustani vocal music, instrumental music and dancing all at the same time.

The departments of art and music of the newly established Visva-Bharati were jointly called 'Kala Bhavan' in 1921. Henceforward for about a decade the annual report of Visva-Bharati referred to Kala Bhavan as the school of "Art and Music". The two departments of Kala Bhavan were separately named in 1933-the department of art was named Kala Bhavan and the department of music Sangita Bhavan. The present house of Sangit Bhavan was built in 1939 with the financial help of the Maharaja of Tripura as well as the Zamindar of Awagarh. Thence forward Sangit Bhavan began to function in that house.

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Dinendra Nath Tagore was the first to become the departmental head of Sangita Bhavan in 1921. Pundit Bhimrao Shastri had also adorned the chair from 1923 to 1927. After 14 years' service in Visva-Bharati at a stretch he left Santiniketan in 1928. He mastered the Bengali language quite well, could sing Tagore Songs and participated in all functions with "Dinubabu" for years together. After hearing his Hindi songs Gurudev put some Bengali words to them to compose what are called Bengali songs based on Hindi originals. In the absence of Sangameswar Shastri, he used to give lessons in veena. Quite a good number of students, both male and female acquired commendable skill at that. For the convenience of the students he had written two books on Hindi music published and printed in Bengali script, the first of them was "Sangit Darpan" and the second "Sangit Parichay". He also published in 1926 a book in Bengali named "Ragasreni" on the ten "thats" of "Bhatkhande" which consisted, apart from an introduction on various ragas and raginis on the ten thats, various' 'gats' on rhythm or tala. In 1927 he published a book of notations named "Sangit Gitanjali' consisting of all the songs of Gurudev's "Gitanjali" and some other in addition. The notations in it followed the "Bhatkhande" system and were in Devangari Script. Gurudev himself wrote the introductions of "Ragasreni" and "Sangi Gitanjali.

Gurudev regarded the ancient Indian system of education with deep respect, yet, he never rejected the realities of the Indian social climate of the Twentieth century. His constant endeavour was to fit the ancient ideal with the present day society of urban and village population. In this endeavour of assimilation he succeeded to a considerable extent. A controversy is raised today on this issue. Some people hold that there have been such changes in the Indian Society and its academic and intellectual values as would call for a rethinking of the original ideas and objectives of tne Visva-Bharati.

The controversy could be resolved if different stages through which Visva-Bharati developed under Gurudev's leadership from the Asram school to the University are kept in view. We fiind a process in which the study of various subjects was combined with

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the cultivation of music, dance, drama, as well as diverse creative and social activities. Visva-Bharati has further been expanded after the death of Gurudev; there is and shall be nothing wrong with any expansion provided it is or shall be based on the values Gurudev cherished for all subjects of teaching including fine and performing arts', a creative pursuit of which, sustains the harmonious growth of the cultured mind.

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